

**Rutherford County Tourism Development Authority  
Board Meeting**

**Call to Order:** 12:06 pm

**Members Present:** Mary Jaeger-Gale, Dave Long, Willard Whitson, Kitty McCammon, Jim Masek, Janet Mason, Jeff Geisler, David Hislop, and Richard Lundy

**Members Absent:** Rocky Guarriello, and Brandon Higgins

**Ex-Officos Present:** Eddie Holland, and Paula Roach

**Ex-Officos Absent:** -----

**Others Present:** Don Cason, Taylor Hardin, Emily Ostertag, Karen Tegen, and Kayley Hargett

**Public Comments:** -----

**Additions / Deletions from Agenda:** -----

**Motion to approve Agenda:**

**Approval:** 1st: Janet Mason

2nd: Jim Masek

Motion Passed.

**Prior Meeting Minutes (changes if necessary):**

**Approval:** 1st: Jim Masek

2nd: Jeff Geisler

Motion Passed.

**Finance Report:**

- Occupancy tax receipts received in February were up from prior years by 25%
- Strategic Plan Implementation Phase I projects will continue to move forward, but on a slight delay, and the TDA will continue to support them
- Events and Group Sales, such as Relocate to Rutherford have been delayed
- Keep Rutherford County Beautiful budget has largely been spent and will move forward with the litter sweep (until further notice)
- Wayfinding signage across the county is set to be completed by the end of the year
- Fund balance projected at \$1.1 million
- There's been a \$600,000 projected drop in budget due to the impact of COVID-19, and this may continue to change as this pandemic progresses
- The TDA is monitoring what other county TDAs are doing during this time to provide relief
- The Agency is working on messaging and timeliness for marketing tourism to our county and will pick up as soon as travel can begin again
- Once travel begins again it is being projected that "drive market" will grow first

**Motion to approve Financial Report:**

**Approval:** 1st: Mary Jaeger-Gale

2nd: Dave Long

Motion Passed.

**2020-2021 Budget**

- Revenue/Occupancy tax has been impacted greatly by COVID-19  
Projecting tourism business will start returning in July / August - 54% of prior years
- Maintained committee requests for budgets and expenses to remain aggressive
- Going to wrap up somewhere close to \$1.1 million, which is a 30% decrease from prior years in hopes that late June/July this might start to return to normal
- Marketing will continue from prior plan, with little change  
Dollars may shift, but the goal is to spend about \$425,000 on marketing Rutherford County
- Projects for next year:
  - Wayfinding should be done, but will continue to be monitored for maintenance
  - TAF is currently under a budget of \$2,000 a month to maintain our Rutherford Bound funds
    - The current TAF contract will be reviewed at the next committee meeting, as a new contract is due July 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Strategic Plan has been cut back, but will maintain dollars to pick back up after COVID-19
    - Rutherford Bound Partner programs of work have been put on hold
- Strategic Plan funding continues with third year of \$50,000 to each town

Community Programs will continue with matching marketing dollars and promotion for county events, but could change with cancellations

- Relocate to Rutherford, Agri-Tourism and several others projects have been put on hold, so the current budget will be maintained
- All expenses will be adjusted as the revenue stream is monitored
- Projecting a \$600,000 decrease in fund balance due to COVID-19
  - TDA fund balance is \$713,000, not accounting for about \$100,000 of grants that are pre-committed

**Executive Director Report:**

Highlights:

- Met with all TDA committees
- Met with McDowell County TDA and Cleveland County TDA Directors to share information about Rutherford County TDA programs
- Attended NC Main Street Conference
- Attended Greenways and Trails Workshop
- Attended County Department Head Special-Called COVID-19 Meeting
- Attended Lake Lure Utility Board Meeting (via Go To Meeting)
- Rutherford Bound Partner Conference Call

**Welcome Center Update:**

As of the third week of March the Lake Lure Welcome Center and Rutherfordton Self-Service Welcome Center were closed to the public, and will remain closed until further notice due to COVID-19

**Marketing Report:**

- The TDA has been working closely with the Agency, although the current advertisements have been put on hold
- The Agency is working on a tab for our website that will share information about COVID-19 and a pop-up has been added to home page.
- Newsletters and correspondence have been produced by the Agency to keep stakeholders up to date on the situation
- We are working on a marketing plan that will pick up once this pandemic has subsided
- The Agency is working on building ads for this marketing plan
- The 2020 Travel Guide has been completed and printed, and will be distributed as soon as it is safe and allowed
  - The Agency Update:
    - All social media and marketing statistics were highlighted in the board materials. Board to contact Taylor with specific questions.

**Committee Updates:**

**Agri-Tourism Committee:**

TDA is co-sponsoring the Rutherford/Polk County Farm Tour

**Strategic Plan Committee:**

The next meeting has been postponed, and current projects and efforts have also been put on hold

**Marketing Committee:**

Met with ICC and Walter Dalton, and will be working on our relationship and partnerships for the future

**Finance Committee:**

Met and helped greatly with establishing the budget and COVID-19 projections

**Relocate to Rutherford Committee:**

Committee is temporarily on hold

**Keep Rutherford County Beautiful Committee:**

Next meeting has been postponed

- The spring litter sweep may be delayed depending on news from health officials
- TDA staff continue to pick-up litter during this new program of work (COVID-19)

**Executive Committee:**

Met and assisted in coming up with the COVID-19 plan

**Announcements:**

- Willard announced an update on the KidSenses museum expansion. Phase I work will be completed by the end of April
- The KidSenses kick-off event that was scheduled for May has been postponed

**Meeting Adjourned:** 1:03 p.m.